

INDIANA SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: Accreditation Reference Guide

Division of School Accreditation
Center for Assessment, Research and Information Technology
Indiana Department of Education

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This document contains information about:

Aims and Goals for Education in Indiana

Accreditation as it Relates to Accountability

Accreditation of Indiana Schools

Types of Accreditation

Accreditation Requirements

Legal Standards

Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plan

Student Achievement

Indiana Academic Standards

Assessment

How the Department of Education Can Help

Introduction

The Indiana General Assembly passed Public Law 221 (P.L. 221) during its 1999 session. P.L. 221 provides for an accountability system that recognizes and demands continuous improvement as the primary focus for education in Indiana's schools.

Dr. Suellen Reed, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, shared some thoughts about accountability and P.L. 221 in the Fall 2001 edition of the *Indiana Educator*: “P.L. 221 will allow us, as a state, to determine whether our schools and students are meeting state goals. It also enables local communities and the state to assist schools that are identified as needing help.”

The State Board of Education, working together with the Education Roundtable, has established administrative rules to implement the requirements of P.L. 221. The State Board considered input from many constituencies—educators, parents, the business community—in developing these rules.

The accountability laws address:

- Standards
- Assessment of Student Achievement and Individual School Improvement
- Accreditation
- Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plan
- Professional Development Program
- Categories of School Improvement

Aims and Goals for Education in Indiana

Aims describe the ultimate, intended result of educational opportunities provided for students in Indiana schools. Aims are only descriptive phrases and cannot be evaluated directly.

Goals describe the educational programs, services, and resources required in order to meet the aims. Goals describe conditions that can and should be evaluated.

Indiana's Aims for Education: These are the five aims for education that were developed and shared by Indiana's Education Roundtable and adopted by the Indiana State Board of Education.

- Aim 1** Safe and Caring Schools
- Aim 2** High Standards, Assessments, and Accountability
- Aim 3** High-Performing System Preparing High-Performing, Responsible, and Responsive Citizens
- Aim 4** High Student Achievement
- Aim 5** Effective Use of Resources

The Indiana Department of Education's Aims for Education: The Department's aims for education are aligned with Indiana's aims.

- Aim 1** Support High Student Achievement
- Aim 2** Promote Safe, Healthy, and Caring Schools
- Aim 3** Promote Effective Use of Resources
- Aim 4** Create and Support a High-Performing Department of Education

Accreditation as it Relates to Accountability

The accreditation component of the accountability system ensures that schools are meeting minimum standards of educational programming and student achievement. Schools can achieve accreditation under performance-based accreditation or by implementing a quality-focused approach to school improvement such as the criteria for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education or those criteria of a national or regional accreditation agency that are approved by the Indiana State Board of Education.

General Comments about Accreditation

Accreditation is a process that crosses disciplines and types of organizations, from businesses and industrial entities to health-care and education institutions. School accreditation provides benefits to a variety of communities. These communities include students, their parents and guardians, teachers and administrators, community members, local businesses, industries, and civic units.

However, most systems for accreditation address some common components.

1. Accreditation is the quality assurance that the institution is meeting minimum standards.
2. Accreditation helps institutions and their component units improve the quality of education services they offer.
3. Accreditation involves initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers.

Accreditation of Indiana Schools

IC 20-1-1.2-2, amended by P.L. 221-1999, provides that “(a) A school in Indiana may be accredited: (1) under the performance-based accreditation system established by this chapter; or (2) by implementing a quality focused approach to school improvement such as the criteria for Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education or for a national or regional accreditation agency that is recommended by the education roundtable and approved by the board.

(b) The board shall establish the following: (1) A performance-based accreditation system for accrediting schools in Indiana under this chapter. (2) A procedure for determining whether a school is making progress toward meeting the criteria for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education or a national or regional accreditation agency.” To meet this statutory requirement, the State Board amended the accreditation rules to incorporate the requirements of the amended accreditation statute.

Some things about accreditation have not changed:

- The State Board of Education is still the only entity with the authority to accredit Indiana schools.
- Accreditation still considers the following three issues: compliance with education laws and rules (legal standards), continuous school improvement, and student achievement.
- All public schools in Indiana, as well as those non-public schools voluntarily seeking accreditation, follow this system.
- Preliminary visitations and on-site reviews still offer opportunities for schools to provide additional information about educational programming and student achievement.
- The State Board determines a school’s accreditation status based on recommendations from the Indiana Department of Education and/or from an on-site review panel.
- A school may be accorded one of three levels of accreditation: full accreditation status, provisional accreditation status, probationary accreditation status.

The amended rules require some changes to the procedures for accreditation.

- **Three-Year Cycle**—Indiana schools will be accredited by the State Board on a three-year cycle. A school holding accreditation under the former performance-based accreditation system shall retain accreditation until the amended system is fully implemented.

NOTE: Information about the specific accreditation year for a school will be communicated to local public school superintendents and educational leaders of non-public school that are seeking accreditation.

- **Legal Standards**—P.L. 221 emphasizes school improvement, public reporting, and accountability at all levels. To meet this emphasis, the following legal standards have been added:

- Mandatory Annual Assessments
- Accurate and Timely Submission of All Reports
- Annual Performance Report

NOTE: More information is provided about legal standards in a later section of this reference guide.

- **School Improvement Planning**—Requirements for continuous school improvement planning have been changed.
 - A school may use the optional format approved by the State Board of Education or any other format that includes the components required by law. The Department of Education will review the plan to assure that all required components are present. Department approval of the plan is not required.
 - A school may implement a quality-focused planning process such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education. The Department of Education will verify participation in Baldrige. Department review of the plan is not required.

- A school may implement the planning process that meets the criteria of a national and regional accreditation agency that the State Board has approved. The Department of Education will verify accreditation by the agency. Department review of the plan is not required.
- A school may use a planning model the State Board has approved that is sponsored by an entity other than an accreditation agency. The Department of Education will verify formal participation in the sponsor's program. Department review of the plan is not required.
- Every Indiana school must submit an initial three-year school improvement plan to the Department no later than June 30, 2002. Annual review and revision by the school are required.
- P.L. 221, as incorporated into IC 20-10.2-3-2, requires that certain procedures be followed at the district level before the school submits its improvement plan to the Department. The following procedures and timeline describe those requirements:

by March 1, 2002	<p>The school committee shall submit the school's initial plan to the superintendent.</p> <p>The superintendent: (1) shall review the plan to ensure that the plan aligns with the school corporation's objectives, goals, and expectations and (2) may make written recommendations of modifications to the plan to ensure alignment.</p>
by April 1, 2002	The superintendent shall return the plan and any recommendations to the school committee
by May 1, 2002	<p>The school committee may modify the plan to comply with recommendations made by the superintendent. A school committee shall submit: (1) the plan; and (2) the written recommendations of the superintendent to the local governing body.</p>

- by June 1, 2002 The school improvement plan must be established—approved—by the local governing body. The governing body shall approve a plan for each school in the school corporation. When a plan is presented to the governing body, the governing body must either accept or reject the plan and may not revise the plan. A plan is established—approved—when written evidence of such approval is attached to the plan.
- by June 30, 2002 The school submits the school improvement plan to the Department.

NOTE: More information is provided about planning for continuous improvement in a later section of this reference guide.

➤ **Student Achievement**—Procedures for reviewing information about student achievement have been changed.

- Accreditation will consider student achievement based on the category to which a school is assigned.
- Information from a variety of assessment tools will be used to review student achievement and assign schools to categories.
- When the assessment system is fully implemented, assessment of student achievement will occur at Grades 3-12.

NOTE: More information is provided about how schools will be assigned to categories in a later section of this reference guide.

Types of Accreditation

Full Accreditation Status

A school will be accorded **full** accreditation status, with review conducted three years after the school is accorded full accreditation status, if that school meets both of the following requirements:

- Compliance with all legal standards and
- Assignment to one of the following categories of school improvement and performance:

Exemplary School

Exemplary Progress

Commendable School

Commendable Progress

Academic Progress (511 IAC 6.2-6-5).

Provisional Accreditation Status

A school will be accorded **provisional** accreditation status, with review conducted annually after the school is accorded provisional accreditation status, if both of the following apply:

- Compliance with all legal standards and
- The school is placed in the academic watch (priority) category of school improvement and performance (511 IAC 6.2-6-5).

OR

A school will be accorded **provisional** accreditation status, with review conducted annually after the school is accorded provisional accreditation status, if both of the following apply:

- Compliance with all legal standards and
- The school is in the first or second year of placement in the academic probation (high priority) category of school improvement and performance (511 IAC 6.2-6-5).

Probationary Accreditation Status

A school will be accorded **probationary** accreditation status if, in the third or subsequent year of academic probation (high priority) category, the school remains in academic probation (high priority) category of school improvement and performance (511 IAC 6.2-6-5).

Accreditation Requirements

Any school, whether a public school or a non-public school, seeking accreditation by the Indiana State Board of Education must meet the same set of requirements: compliance with legal standards, completion of a school improvement plan, and review of student achievement indicators.

Accreditation requirements for Indiana schools include:

Legal Standards

Each school will comply with the following legal standards.

- Health and Safety
- Minimum Time
- Staff-Student Ratio
- Curriculum Offerings
- Instructional Staff
- ISTEP+ Participation
- Mandatory Annual Assessments
- Accurate and Timely Submission of All Reports
- Annual Performance Report

See the accreditation law (IC 20-1-1.2-7) and State Board accreditation rules (511 IAC 6.1) for citations to related laws and rules.

See accreditation website (www.doe.state.in.us/pba) for a complete list of legal standards.

Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plan

Each school will complete and provide to the Department a copy of the school's most recently revised strategic and continuous school improvement and achievement plan.

See the accountability law (IC 20-10.2-3) and State Board rules (511 IAC 6.2) for more detailed information about the requirements for developing a school improvement plan..

Planning for Continuous School Improvement

Currently in Indiana, schools are using a variety of change initiatives and planning models. Using strategic planning, the elements of these models can be combined into a single, focused process with a resulting plan for continuous school improvement.

P.L. 221 allows that “If, for a purpose other than a plan under this chapter, a school has developed materials that are substantially similar to a component listed [in the law], the school may substitute those materials for the component listed [in the law].” IC 20-10.2-3-5(b)

Planning Models

Currently the following programs or planning models have been approved by the State Board to fulfill the plan requirements:

- Locally Developed Planning Model (PBA)—Schools may use the optional format approved by the State Board of Education or any other format that includes the components required by law. The Department will review the plan to assure that all required components are present. Department approval of the plan is not required.
- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Education—The Department of Education will verify participation in Baldrige. Department review of the plan is not required.
- National and Regional Accreditation Agencies—The Department of Education will verify accreditation by the agency. Department review of the plan is not required.
 - North Central Association (NCA)
 - Accrediting Association of Seventh-Day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AASDAS)
 - American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)
 - Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
 - Christian Schools International (CSI)
 - Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)
 - International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA)
 - National Lutheran Schools Accreditation (NLSA)

- Planning Models sponsored by an entity other than an accreditation agency-
The Department of Education will verify formal participation in the sponsor's program. Department review of the plan is not required.
 - [Indiana] Title 1 Continuous School Improvement Process (SWP/TAS)
 - Connected Learning Assures Successful Students (C.L.A.S.S.)
 - [Effective Schools] Strategic Planning for the 21st Century/Phi Delta Kappa
 - High Schools That Work/Southern Regional Educational Board (HSTWSREB/InDOE)
 - Indiana Essential Schools (InDOE)
 - Indiana Student Achievement Institute/American SAI/various Indiana entities (InSAI)
 - Journey to Learning Planning and Performance Program/Indiana University Center for Research on Learning and Technology
 - Koalaty Kid/American Society for Quality (ASQ)
 - Partners on the Journey/Archdiocese of Indianapolis
 - Quality Learning/Langford International
 - School Improvement Focusing on Student Performance/National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE)
 - The School Portfolio/Education for the Future/Victoria Bernhardt
 - Standard-Bearer District-Wide Model/Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR)

Participants

P.L. 221 specifies roles for the following:

- School Principal
- School Staff Members
- Parents
- Community and Business Leaders
- School Board Members
- Superintendent

Additional perspectives may be gained by involving other people in the process:

- Other Central Office Administrators
- Students (where age appropriate)

See the accreditation website (www.doe.state.in.us/pba) for information about possible roles and responsibilities of various participants.

Professional Development

Professional development is critical at all phases of the continuous school improvement process:

- professional development allows educators and other school improvement planners to gather and process information during the planning process.
- professional development provides the vehicle for implementing the goals and objectives of the school improvement plan.

P.L. 221 specifically requires that professional development be coordinated with objectives in the school improvement plan.

The Indiana State Board of Education advocates the following core principles for professional development. These principles suggest that professional development:

1. Address issues that are relevant to the priorities of educational improvement and reflect the knowledge base of the profession.
2. Engage educators in an effective learning process that impacts practice.
3. Contribute to developing an environment that supports educators' professional growth.

See State Board rules (511 IAC 6.2-4) for indicators that define the core principles.

See P.L. 221 InfoCenter website (www.doe.state.in.us/pl221) for additional information and template for the Professional Development Grant.

An Optional School Improvement Plan Format

In the optional school improvement plan format, the following codes apply:

(R) = Required by P.L. 221

(I) = Implied

(S) = Suggested

A school may use, but is not required to use, the following format for its plan.

(1) Introduction, including the following:

- Narrative description of the school, the community, and the educational programs (S)
- Description and location of curriculum (R)
- Titles and descriptions of assessment instruments to be used in addition to ISTEP+ (R)

(2) Statement of mission, vision, or beliefs (S)

(3) Summary of data derived from an assessment of the current status of educational programming, including the following:

- Data, including graphs, from the annual performance report (I)
- Data related to performance indicators other than those included in the annual performance report (I)
- Other information about educational programming and the learning environment (I)

(4) Conclusions about the current educational programming, derived from an assessment of education programming, including the following:

- Information about how the school's curriculum supports the achievement of Indiana Academic Standards (I)
- Information about how the school's instructional strategies support the achievement of Indiana Academic Standards (I)
- Assessment of student achievement based on ISTEP+ and other assessment strategies (I)
- Parental participation in the school (R)
- Technology as a learning tool (R)
- Safe and disciplined learning environment (R)
- Professional development (R)

- (5) Student achievement objectives**, derived from an assessment of the current status of educational programming , including the following:
- Attendance rate (R)
 - Percentage of students meeting academic standards under the ISTEP+ program (R)
 - Graduation rate (for secondary schools) (R)
- (6) Specific areas where improvement is needed immediately.** (R)
- (7) Benchmarks for progress** that specify how and to what extent the school expects to make continuous improvement in all areas of the educational system (R)
- (8) Academic Honors Diploma and Core 40**, including the following:
- Provisions to offer courses that allow all students to become eligible to earn the Academic Honors Diploma (R)
 - Provisions to encourage all students to earn an Academic Honors Diploma or to complete the Core 40 curriculum (R)
- (9) Proposed interventions** (strategies) based on school improvement goals (S)
- (10) Professional development** that is coordinated with proposed interventions and that supports sustainable school improvement efforts (R)
- (11) Statutes and rules to be waived** (R)
- (12) Three (3) year time line** for implementation, review, and revision (R)

Student Achievement

Accreditation will consider student achievement based on the category to which a school is assigned.

School Improvement and Performance Categories

The State Board of Education will place schools in categories based on school improvement and school performance on the following primary indicators of progress:

- ISTEP+ English/language arts and mathematics tests at Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10
- English/language arts tests at Grades 4, 5, 7, and 9
- ISTEP+ science tests and social studies tests when implemented at Grades 5, 7, and 9.
- Science and social studies tests at Grades 4, 6, and 8
- Core 40 end-of-course tests

Category Names:

- Exemplary School
Exemplary Progress
- Commendable School
Commendable Progress
- Academic Progress
- Academic Watch (Priority)
- Academic Probation (High Priority)

See the accountability law (IC 20-10.2) and State Board rules (511 IAC 6.2-6) for more detailed information about how schools will be assigned to categories.

Indiana Academic Standards

Academic standards that are clear, concise, and jargon-free have been developed for the following content areas:

- English Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Mathematics Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Science Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Fine Arts Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Foreign Language Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Physical Education Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Social Studies Standards 2000, K-12 (adopted)
- Health Standards 2000, K-12 (in process)
- Vocational/Technical Education Program Standards (in place)

Timeline for Aligning ISTEP+ with Indiana Academic Standards

The following timeline for implementation is suggested for aligning ISTEP+ with the Indiana Academic Standards:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2002-03 | First year that ISTEP+ will be based on 2000 Indiana Academic Standards in English/language arts and mathematics at Grades 3, 6, and 8 |
| 2002-03 | First year for ISTEP+ in science (Grade 5 only) |
| 2003-04 | First year for ISTEP+ in social studies (Grade 5 only); base year for improvement and performance determinations for elementary and middle schools |
| 2003-04 | First year for annual assessments in English/language arts and mathematics (Grades 3-9) |
| 2004-05 | First year that ISTEP+ will be based on 2000 Indiana Academic Standards in English/language arts and mathematics (Grade 10); base year for improvement and performance determinations for high schools |
| 2005-06 | First year that a school will be assigned to a category |

Assessment

Public schools and accredited nonpublic schools will administer the following assessments:

- ISTEP+ English and mathematics tests at Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10
- English and mathematics tests at Grades 4, 5, 7, and 9
- ISTEP+ science tests and social studies tests when implemented at Grades 5, 7, and 9
- Science and social studies tests at Grades 4, 6, and 8
- Core 40 end-of-course tests

Mandatory annual assessments must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be aligned with Indiana academic standards.
- Test basic skills and applied skills.
- Be graded on a common vertical scale.
- Meet security requirements listed in the ISTEP+ program manual.
- Provide, as appropriate, a method of grading that will allow comparison with national and international academic standards.

Annual assessments are mandatory if funding is available for the state to provide such assessments. The state will establish a process to approve tests other than the state-provided test for off-ISTEP+ year testing.

Mobility: A school is accountable for a student in the improvement comparisons if the student was enrolled in the school for at least 70% of the preceding year.

How the Department of Education Can Help

Opportunities will be provided for school improvement leaders to come together and discuss important education issues. Topics will include, but not be limited to:

- Data-driven decision-making
- Indiana Academic Standards
- Alignment of local curriculum and instruction to the Indiana Academic Standards
- Professional development as an integrated part of the school improvement plan

Support to schools: Data from the 2002 test administration will be used to identify and provide assistance to schools in the lowest categories and to students not meeting standards.

Specific decisions about the continuous school improvement process and the design of the school improvement plan are made at the local level.

No consultant-of-record will be assigned to schools to provide direct assistance with plan development; however, consultants from the Department will be available for information and other assistance as needed.

<www.doe.state.in.us> This is the general website for the Indiana Department of Education. This website includes much valuable information about programs and services provided by the Department.

<www.doe.state.in.us/pl221> This website provides current information about the progress of implementing the requirements of P.L. 221.

<www.doe.state.in.us/pba> This website includes general information about accreditation as well as specific information about legal standards, school improvement planning, and student achievement.

<www.doe.state.in.us/publications/schooldirectory> Pages 1-5 of this Directory list Department of Education divisions with descriptions of services provided by that division.

NOTES